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A Comparative Study of Teaching English in Private and Public Schools with reference to Aizawl

Abstract: Aizawl is the capital city of Mizoram which is situated in the north east of India. The researcher examines and compares private schools and public schools in Aizawl. She observes the teaching methods applied by the English teachers in both these schools. The reason for doing this research is that students from public schools seem to be weaker in speaking, reading and understanding English than students who attend private schools. The study explores several internal and external factors that exist in two schools. It looks at factors such as teachers', student', administrators and parents' attitude which contribute to the success and effectiveness of both the schools.

The study examines the teaching methods approached by the English teachers of both these schools. The researcher surveyed both public and private schools and also interacted with the students and observed their English classes.

Introduction

Language is a means of communicating thoughts and feelings. We can also communicate through cries, signs, gestures etc. but these modes of communication are totally different from human language. The human language is a signally system which uses vocal sounds. It

is based on man's ability to speak. The written language is derivatives and secondary. It is derived from the spoken language. The basis of language is speech which in turn means the production of meaningful sounds according to a system.

Man alone uses language for communication. In Dwight Bolinger words, "Language is species specific. It is uniquely human trait by the cultures so diverse and by individuals physically and mentally so unlike one another."

Language has always had a place for human heart. One of the great achievements of the man is his ability to use language. Language in fact is a great tool which has made human civilization possible. Language is also the most important tool for thinking.

The purpose of language is communication, it involves encoding and decoding and both these processes take place simultaneously. This is possible only when the sender and receiver of the code are familiar with the vocal sounds, the words and phrases with these sound constitute, the structural arrangement of the words and phrases, their semantic imparts etc.

Role of English in Mizoram

In Mizoram English continues to be the medium of instruction in schools, colleges and universities and is also the language of the administration. Emphasizing the role of English as one of the Education Commissions has emphatically asserted, "For a successful completion of the first degree course, a student should possess an adequate command of English, understand lectures in it and avail himself of its literature. Therefore adequate emphasis will have to be laid on its study as a language right from the school stage, English should be most useful 'library language' in higher education and our most significant window on the world."

English is used in all competitive exams, interviews, institutions and for securing a job. A person speaking good English is considered to be highly educated and is given a high status

in a Mizo society. Since every job seeking person needs to acquire good command of English, its importance cannot be undermined.

Importance of English as a Window on Modern World

It is only with the help of knowledge of English that we can get information about the advancement taking place throughout the world. Emphasizing the importance of knowledge of English the Radha Krishanan University Education Commission observed, “English is a language which is rich in literature, humanistic, scientific and technical. If under sentimental urges we should give up English, we would cut ourselves off from the living stream of ever growing knowledge.”

F.G. French observes that it is only through this language that we have “distilled essence of modern knowledge in all fields of human activity. Anyone who can read English can keep in touch with the world without leaving his house.” English language and the teaching of it occupy a very important place today throughout the world. As it is a global language, the teaching and learning of it is a must everywhere. English is one of the dominant languages of wider communication (LWC) in the world. More and more people are using it in business, industry, policies, education and the various professions. The more English is used, the greater is the need to teach it as foreign language, and the greater is the need to teach it, the greater is the need to train teachers to teach it.

English helps us keep in touch with the world’s ever increasing explosion of knowledge and techno-logical advancement, which is an important factor for a developing country like India. If we just look up at space technology we can find that without adequate knowledge of English we cannot understand and absorb the development in the field. Any attempt of translating technical terms into regional languages will be disastrous and will have an adverse

effect on the Indian space programme which will come to a standstill in the absence of English educated scientist, technicians and engineers.

For bringing about revolutionary changes in various fields such as that of agriculture, medicines, industry, transport, telecommunication etc. it is essential for us to be in touch with the outside world and it is possible only with an adequate knowledge of English. It is only through English that we bring various scientific discoveries to our country.

English is very rich in scientific and technical knowledge and so the knowledge of English is the only means of preventing our isolation from the world. Discarding English will amount to closing a window on the world of technology. We will fall back hundreds of years and will never be able to catch up with the developed world. We cannot think of taking India into 21st century without capitalizing on English. The study of English will continue for the progress of the country.

Aims of Teaching English

In Mizoram, English now exists as a second language and it should be taught as a language and not as a literature. The aim of teaching English in India is to help students to acquire practical command of English. The basic aims of teaching English are:-

i) To understand spoken English (Listening)

The student should understand spoken English required in ordinary conversation, exchange of greetings, receiving orders and directions, listening to lectures, talks etc.

This aim can be achieved if we give opportunities to our students to watch English movies, listen to music etc.

ii) To speak English (Speaking)

To speak English a student is required to produce sounds with proper stress and intonation. Speech occupies a unique position in bearing a language and is the base for all language learning.

iii) To understand written English (Reading)

When students leave the school, they should be able to understand the written English in books, magazines, newspapers etc. It is also expected that they should be able to adopt English as a medium of instructions and also during examinations.

iv) To write English (Writing)

Writing English is in no way less than speaking English. It is important that students should be able to write in English simple letters, messages, applications, description and accounts of events. These abilities are required in offices of any organizations. It is also highly needed in schools, colleges and universities for taking notes of lectures delivered in English.

Statement of the problem

The tremendous growth in student enrolment and the increase in private schools in Aizawl indicate that private education has been very popular. It has been observed that students from public schools seem to be weaker in the four skills of language – learning, speaking, reading and writing. The learning conditions under which English is taught and learnt and the reasons for low standards of English in our schools are as under:

- i) The teacher in the schools teach English and the learners learn English but none of them is fully clear about the real purpose of teaching- learning English. Both the teachers and the students are not clear about the aims of teaching English.
- ii) Many English teachers in Aizawl who are teaching the subject are not competent. Very few of them are really competent for teaching the subject. They have defective pronunciation. They have hardly a satisfactory command over English.
- iii) The teaching methods adopted for teaching English in Aizawl are quite defective. The translation method of teaching is used in most of the schools. They simply enable the students to pass the examination. The composition is dictated by the teacher, the textbooks translated into mother tongue and the entire emphasis is on passing the examination by means of learning it by-heart.
- iv) The conditions of the classroom, the number of students in a class, the physical arrangement for the class, teaching materials etc is the number factor which need to be considered as a problem for teaching English. Also, the classroom strength plays an important role if one has to pay attention to students to check time and again if they make progress in learning the language.
- v) The lack of audio- visual aids is another factor that has to be kept in mind. Students need to see and hear what they are learning in order to get the right pronunciation, tone etc.

- vi) The two vital factors in a second- language learning are the students and the teachers. The teacher skills and personality are instrumental in creating the necessary conditions for learning. She needs to be proficient in the language; her knowledge and expertise in methods and techniques of language learning should of a reasonably high standard.
- vii) Faulty methods applied by the English teachers are another factor that needs to be considered as a problem. Too much emphasis on grammar and composition need to be lessened. Instead, teachers should give more importance on the four basic skills of language teaching. English teachers should restrain from using too much mother tongue in the classroom. A judicious used of mother tongue may be needed or permissible but the wholesale and indiscriminate use of mother tongue should not be permissible.
- viii) The examination in English puts a lot of importance on note learning rather than on language mastery. There is no examination in spoken English. As so much importance is given to written English. Hence, Mizo students face problems in speaking English fluently. Though they know how to read and write English yet they do not achieve the skill in spoken English.

Objective of the Study

- i) To observe the methods of teaching English adopted by both private and public schools English teachers.
- ii) To examine whether the students of both the schools listen, speak , read and write English with proper understanding

- iii) To identify whether students from the schools can speak English clearly and audibly. It means producing sounds with correct intonation and stress
- iv) To examine whether students from both the schools can write English correctly and meaningfully
- v) To see whether both the schools have the facilities of language labs, audio visuals etc
- vi) To examine whether the English teachers of both the schools are well acquainted with the four language skills
- vii) To test the proficiency and competency of the teachers of both the schools
- viii) To observe if the students of both the schools are given to express themselves freely in the classrooms
- ix) To observe whether the students of both the schools take interests in English
- x) To observe whether students of both the schools express themselves creatively and imaginatively
- xi) To observe whether the students of both the schools are enthusiastic and reflective readers through contact with challenging and text knowledge

Need for the Study

Teaching profession is not an easy task. Teachers need to have the ability to use several methods and approaches and teaching aids. They have to play multiple roles in the classroom.

Teaching English to young learners is a very challenging task for any English teacher.

Teachers have to see that the students understand English and that they are able to comprehend the spoken words taught in the classroom

Though there are many public schools in Aizawl, yet the rise of private schools cannot be overlooked. The teachers of public schools earn much higher salary than the ones teaching in

private schools and the fees are much lesser than the private schools. However, many parents choose to send their children in private schools with much higher fees. It has also been observed that students studying in private schools are better speakers in English than the ones studying in public schools.

In Mizo society, speaking and ability to speak fluently in English hold a very high esteem in the society. English is the second and official language of the state. It is used in institutions, administrations, commerce and industries and higher education as well. Thus, English plays an important role as it is associated with social power and prestige.

The teaching methods and approaches adopted by both the schools need to be examined. The teachers' proficiency and competency in the language also need to be thoroughly explored. Teachers felt that size of classroom, lack of resources, and quantum of workload affected teaching English in the classroom. Thus, it is very much necessary to find out problems in teaching English with respect to school related, availability of instructional resources, background of teachers methods of teaching English and teaching experience.

English language and the teaching of it occupy a very important place throughout the world. As it is a global language, the teaching and learning of English is a must everywhere. This present study has been confined to public and private middle schools (v- viii) within Aizawl city.

Scope of the Study

The scope of study is confined to public and private middle schools (v- viii) within Aizawl city. The researcher explores several schools to observe the teaching styles adopted and the learning ability of the young learners particularly in English.

Research Methodology

Survey Method has been adopted to achieve the objective of the study. Several public and private schools were visited to identify the problems faced by both the teachers and the students. It explores the nature of the study and the methods adopted in teaching the English subject. The researcher observed the classrooms and interviewed both the students and the teachers to examine whether the students are learning the language and to see if the teachers are competent in teaching the language.

The researcher observed the classroom settings and interacted with the students. Many information were gathered through interview of both the teachers and the students. The teachers of both the schools answered and completed the questionnaire and the students were interviewed and observed in the class to test their level of understanding and their ability to communicate in English.

Major Findings

1. Many English teachers of both public and private schools are not acquaint with the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading and writing
2. Though some of the private schools English teachers are aware of phonetics and teach their students, it is observed that most of the public schools English teachers are not aware of phonetics and thus cannot teach the young learners.
3. The private school teachers are young and energetic and represent themselves well whereas the public school teachers are not so young and thus are not updated to new methods of learning

4. The private school teachers use English in the classrooms and while interacting with the students. The public school teachers use the mother tongue and does not interact in English with the students
5. The private school students are not allowed to speak in their mother tongue whereas such rules are not applied for the public school students
6. There is a lot of interaction in English between the students and the teachers in the private schools whereas this interaction does not take place in the public schools
7. The students of private schools are asked to write essays, compositions and book reviews whereas such creative writings are not practiced in public schools
8. The classroom environments of private schools allow the students to express themselves freely and creatively whereas public schools do not facilitate such creative environment.
9. It is also observed that private schools students are mostly from well to do families whose parents are educated whereas public school students are mostly from poorer class society whose parents are illiterate and uneducated.
10. The background and home environment of the students play a vital role in learning and speaking the English language.
11. The private going students mostly receive exposure in terms of going for holidays outside station whereas the public going students do not get the luxury of such exposure.
12. It is observed that private school students are more confident in speaking and interacting in English whereas the students of public school hesitate and lack confidence in speaking the language
13. Most private schools English teachers let their students recite poems, narrate a story whereas public schools do not practice such methodology

14. Through interviews with the students it is observed that private schools students mostly do not watch Mizo translated movies whereas this trend of watching Mizo translated movies are very much practiced among the students of public school
15. The students of private schools are encouraged to watch English movies and thus the schools observe a movie day where the students gather to watch movies in the school halls. Such practiced is not observed in public schools.
16. Most students of private schools are able to speak and write English considerably well whereas students of public school are not able to do it.

Suggestions for Improving Teaching English at the Middle School of Public and Private Schools in Aizawl

1. Any English teacher needs to undergo training of the four language skills
2. Public and private schools need to be equipped with better facilities of language lab which would help both the teachers and the students in learning the language
3. The classroom environment of public schools needs to provide opportunities for young learners to express themselves freely and creatively
4. The teachers of public schools need to upgrade themselves in terms of teaching methods and approaches to language teaching
5. The teachers of public schools encourage their students to speak and interact in English both inside and outside the classrooms
6. Students of public schools need to imbibe confidence and this can be achieved through their teachers. They should not be ignored or made fun of if they speak wrong grammar. Students must never be apprehended for speaking in wrong English

7. Students should be allowed to make mistakes when speaking in English and not be corrected on the spot . This is because their fear of making mistake would not allow them to speak the language freely
8. Students of public schools should be given maximum exposure in listening to English language through music, movies, talk shows etc
9. Students of public schools need to go for excursion at least once a year so as to get exposure to the outside world and the teachers must take responsibility over it.
10. Public schools students should be encouraged to review books, movies etc . This will help in creative writing and expressing themselves freely in English
11. Teachers of public schools must let their students recite poems, narrate a story and read the text in English class. This would boost the students' confidence level and help acquire the language better
12. English teachers need to have a wide ranging enthusiasm and imagination
13. The English teachers should be able to let their students think in English.
14. Group discussion on their interest topics must be arranged for young learners. This would help them in speaking and communicate in the language without much hesitation.
15. Public schools teachers must let their students learn at least one English vocabulary a day. This will help the students in building their vocabulary.

Conclusion

In observing both public and private schools in Aizawl in the field of English language teaching, it has been learnt that teachers of both the schools have a huge responsibility towards their students, the young learners. Private schools English teachers perform much better than public schools English teachers in terms of making the students speak in English. While speaking in Mizo language is prohibited in most of private schools, the same rule does

not apply for public schools. The students of public schools must be encouraged maximum use of English inside and outside the classroom. Though the background of the students are very much different economically, the teachers role in imparting the knowledge of English language play a more vital role. The teachers' role in English language teaching is immensely important and they need to be wrapped with competency and proficiency in teaching the language to our young learners of English.

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